

Batt sports

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Needs to develop depth

Secondary boasts talent, quickness, versatility

By MIKE BRUTON
Sports Editor

Texas A&M is known to carry many traditions and the Aggie defensive secondary is no exception.

Over the past five regular seasons A&M is ranked No. 8 in the nation in yardage allowed through the air. The Aggie pass defenders were ranked No. 2 last season and No. 5

two years ago. Assistant Head Coach and Defensive Coordinator Melvin Robertson seems to believe that the 1975 A&M secondary will certainly uphold the tradition. "If we can hold up early in the season and develop, they (this year's quartet) could be better than the group last year," A&M's defensive strategist said.

Being better than Tim Gray, No. 1 pick of the St. Louis Cardinals; James Daniels, No. 7 pick of the Oakland Raiders, along with All-American Pat Thomas and Jackie Williams who are still with the Aggies, is by no means easy. But A&M has in the 1975 edition of pass defenders, talent and versatility equaled by few, if any.

Along with Thomas and Williams will be Willie Thompson at a cornerback and Reggie Williams or Lester Hayes at the strong safety. In that group of men are some of the fastest, strongest, quickest, surest tacklers in the country. And instructing them is one of the nation's foremost defensive innovators in the person of Robertson. Every coach in the Southwest Conference will agree that there are areas in A&M's secondary where mortal men dare not tread.

The Aggies line up in a basic 4-3 defense with four men deep, (two corners and two safeties) usually playing a zone. With "Mr. Lightning" himself, Thomas and catlike Thompson on the flanks and hard-hitters Jackie Williams and Reggie Williams at the safeties with a fuel injected Hayes alternating, the Aggies have tons of potential in the defensive backfield. Neglecting to

mention other sound pass defenders like Tony Blankenship, Charles Bell, Charlie Arndt and Mike Williams.

Robertson plans to utilize the versatility of the talent in the Aggie secondary. "We'll do a few little variations to take advantage of the talent of some of our kids. I can afford to call a cornerback blitz with a player as quick as Pat Thomas, or a safety blitz with a kid as big and fast as Lester Hayes," Robertson explained.

Robertson also said he would like to see all his top guns develop to the point that he could substitute freely. "I'd like to be able to play six or eight guys a game," he said.

No matter who plays, there is one person that you can be sure to see and that's A&M's only first team All-America selection since Dave Elmendorf, Pat Thomas.

Thomas (5-9, 180) played his cornerback position last season like he invented it. He refused to give up yardage on sweeps, continuously making spectacular plays and throwing runners for losses. The muscular

(See AGGIE defensive Page 10)

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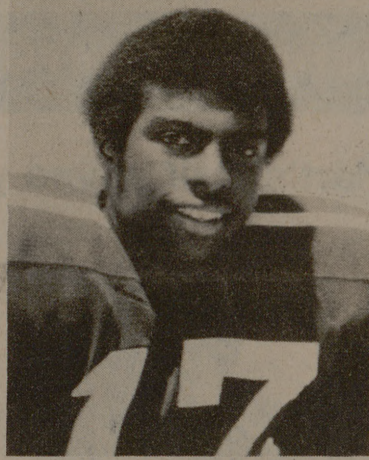
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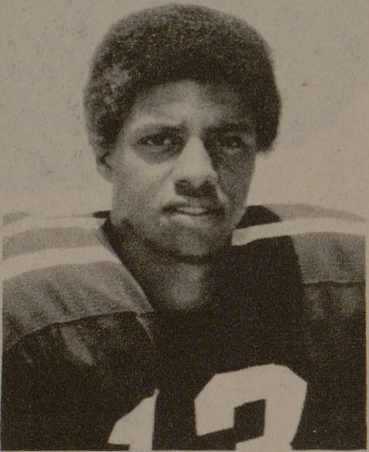
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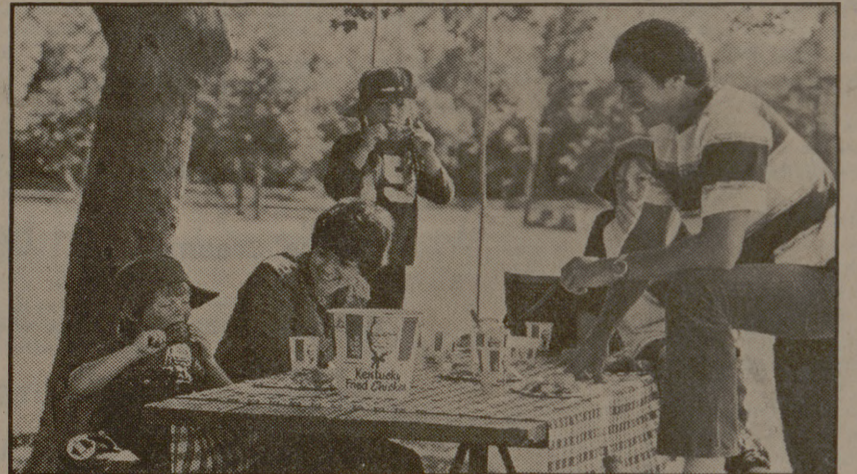


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